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# ART AND PROGRESS

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PALACE OF FINE ARTS AT PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

## THE INFLUENCE OF WORLD'S FAIRS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ART\*

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ONE need not wander far afield for material with which to illustrate the influence of World's Fairs upon every phase of our modern life. East and West alike echo today to the voice of that influence. Our homes, our great industrial hives, our public buildings all pulse in response to it. There is no day in all our lives which is not fuller and brighter and betier because of what World's Fairs have taught us. It would be well, however, if in any consideration of these great expositions which have marked and stimulated human achievement, we keep in constant remembrance the fact, that since the days when King

Ahasuerus "showed for many days even one hundred and four score days" in the third year of his reign "the riches of his glorious kingdom," the backbone of every great exposition has been its exhibition of the arts.

Twenty years before the birth of this nation, in 1756, the first great Anglo-Saxon exhibition, held in London, was fathered and fostered by the Society of Arts.

In 1797 France entered the exposition field with a collective display of its art factories, including those of Sèvres, the Gobelins and the Savonnerie, and in the exposition held in Paris in 1801,

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\*A paper read at the Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Chicago, May 23, 1914.

where, for the first time juries of award began their more or less ineffectual efforts to guide the public taste and knowledge, we find the arts given first prominence in the report of the jury, where it is stated: "There is no artist or inventor who, once obtaining thus a public recognition of his ability, has not found his reputation and his business largely increased."

It is interesting to note that the awards of that first jury acquired at once a material value, for the recipients of gold medals in that exposition were invited to dine with the then First Consul, Napoleon Bonaparte. Let us hope that the dinner was worthy of the company.

Despite the antiquity of expositions of the products of the arts and industries, it was not until 1851 that the first great International Exposition was held. Here, again, in London, we find that under the presidency of the Prince Consort the exposition was organized and managed by the Society of Arts. Modestly making the period of this Hyde Park Exposition fifteen days shorter than the period during which the Hebrew King showed "the riches of his glorious kingdom," we find, nevertheless, that the number of visitors to the exposition of 1851 exceeded six millions of people. Even our correspondence schools of today have no such number upon their rosters.

In its direct effect upon the arts, no exposition has ever exerted a greater influence than this first World's Fair. It brought home to the British people the fact that in artistic training and taste they were far behind their Continental neighbors; and, under the wise guidance of the exposition's president, there was immediately established the South Kensington School which, however we may at times deplore its stodginess, its tenacity to the early Victorian ideals, we must admit has revolutionized art education in Great Britain and, to a very great extent, been the pattern for many of the schools in our own country.

The Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876 found us a nation robbed by war of all save the barest

recollection of esthetic activity—a country without painters, without sculptors and architecturally banal to the last degree. Architectural design and ornament were confined to what is, I believe, technically known as "mill-work"; the Rogers groups were our highest ideal in sculpture, and even the pictorial patriots of the Hudson River School had been replaced by the chromo-lithographer, while for portraiture we chose between wet-plate photography, the ferro-type and the crayon enlargement.

Withholding no credit from those leaders in the art of painting—Duveneck, Chase and their fellows, who, just at that time, had returned to America bringing with them native enthusiasm plus Continental training, there can be no question that their seed would have fallen upon very barren ground had it not been for the great public awakening in matters of taste for which the Philadelphia Exposition was responsible.

In his admirable work on "The Development of Art Education in the United States" James Parton Haney says of this exposition: "As an agent in raising public standards of taste it did striking service. The great picture galleries were a revelation and delight to thousands who had never had an opportunity to see pictures in such number and excellence. The contribution of foreign nations also excited admiration for the display of skilled craftsmanship, with a realization, similar to that created in England in 1851, that the country must look to itself if it would compete with the state-trained artists of foreign workshops."

Well, as you know, the country did look to itself. In less than a score of years from the closing of Philadelphia's great contribution to our national education, our painters, our sculptors, our architects had looked to themselves so well that there arose in Chicago that glorious result of united effort of the three arts, the dream city by the lake which none of you who saw can ever forget, despite the glories of St. Louis and the greater glories yet to come from out the Golden West.

Before 1876 we were a nation almost barren of any general art education. The schools of the Pennsylvania Academy, the pioneer institution in America, active as far back as the days of the elder Peale, had become somnolent. The National Academy of Design having vainly struggled generations before the war, as it has struggled since, to make New York a center of creative art, now peacefully slept. The school of the Boston Museum was non-existent and the school of the Chicago Art Institute, the largest of American art schools, was undreamed of. Precisely five years after the Centennial Exposition—in 1881—the United States Bureau of Education reports no less than twelve such schools which had been organized within the five-year period. To those who may be deceived into the supposition that the influence of World's Fairs is in any degree local, the list of those first children of the Philadelphia Exposition is instructive. They were: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Decorative Art Society of Baltimore, the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Art School of Smith College, the school established by the Art Association of Springfield, the Society of Decorative Art of New York, the School of Design of Vassar, the Woman's Art Museum Association of Cincinnati, the Columbus Art School, the Pennsylvania School of Industrial Art, the Rhode Island School of Design and the School of the Washington Art Club.

What Philadelphia began Chicago, the city of aspiration and accomplishment, continued. Nearly ten millions of people visited the Philadelphia Exposition. Over twenty-one millions drew inspiration from Chicago. The result of the lessons here taught were, we may well believe, that hundreds of thousands of honest sturdy Americans first realized that beauty was a real and existent thing; that it added something to the pleasures of life; that in some, not altogether understood, way it made life more worth while; that it was something to be sought after and being found to be lived with. Specific results in the organiza-

tion of cumulative endeavor I need not point out to you, for your own organization is, itself, a part of these—a part, let us hope, fertile for the future.

The list of art schools and museums between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi Valley, founded in the reflected light of the Chicago World's Fair, is too long to attempt to read to you and too rapidly growing to believe that, even if read today, it would be complete tomorrow.

As the President of the Society of Western Artists has well said: "The World's Columbian Exposition raised our prairie States from a dead horizontal to an aspiring vertical."

That the St. Louis Exposition in 1904 fed somewhat the same streams which had their sources in Chicago years earlier, will not be regarded as a criticism by those who radiate the depth and power of their mighty tide.

So much for the public mind. The development of art, however, has two hands, and one hand washes the other. The association of artists in the exposition of their works on an impressive scale is, as we have seen, a tremendous influence in awakening the public's concern in matters artistic. But it is the awakened public which, in turn, reacts upon and restimulates the creative artist, himself.

We have read from the graceful pen of Mr. Whistler: "That this man who took joy in the ways of his brethren—who cared not for conquest, and fretted in the field—this designer of quaint patterns—this deviser of the beautiful—who perceived in Nature about him curvings, as faces are seen in the fire, this dreamer apart, was the first artist."

Well, he may have been the first artist but, in all humility, I suggest that Mr. Whistler was in error when he goes on to say that "the people questioned not and had nothing to say in the matter."

In all history no love song was ever sung by a hermit. The poet, the painter, the sculptor must have his audience. Be his genius never so immortal, its expression without the stimulus of sympathetic

appreciation must gradually become a mere stenographic notation of his own cerebrations.

It was in response to the public interest awakened in Philadelphia, to the recognition of our country's artistic needs and the consequent desire to uphold the hands of our artists, that there grew up in this country a wide demand for the works of our native painters and sculptors between the years of 1880 and 1893.

It was this finally awakened and rapidly growing desire on the part of the public, collectors and museums alike, which gave rise to renewed creative activity and established those higher technical standards which made possible the artistic side of the Chicago Exposition. It was, in turn, the still fuller appreciation of our own native workers which grew out of that exposition, the acknowledgment by critics both at home and abroad, that the United States could no longer be considered an artistic nonentity; the conviction that, beyond the American shoe, the American agricultural implement and the American dentist, we had still further claims in the direction of civilization through the American artist, that have again reacted upon the painter and sculptor alike, until we have today an almost universal recognition of the fact that the large exhibitions, held by any one of half a dozen of our leading art institutions, present a higher level of work than is found in similar exhibitions in Europe. I will go a step further and state, without fear of contradiction, that nowhere in the world today are professional painters and sculptors doing as vital work as they are in our own land. Their high aspirations, their amazing virtuosity, the power of the force of their work, the stupendous accomplishment of the American artist in the last two decades, would not have been possible without an ever-increasing audience having at once sympathy and understanding. This audience, eager, watchful and friendly, this bulwark of strength for the workers in pigment and in clay, this stimulus to fairer dreams and their fuller expression, would never have existed except for the expositions

of Philadelphia, Chicago and St. Louis.

We are now on the eve of another World's Fair. What its influence upon the development of art will be is a matter which concerns both you and me alike, which concerns the artists and the public, which concerns the nations.

On February 20, 1915, an observer standing on the high hills of San Francisco will see spread out at his feet, just within the sheltering headlands of the Golden Gate, bordering a bay—whose beauties are beyond any word of mine to describe—the grounds of the exposition, occupied and adorned by buildings which are at once a triumph of architectural beauty and almost the perfection of utilitarian design. Beneath the Californian sun, their walls, the color of travertine stone, their domes of sparkling hue, their ornate and colorful courts, their lofty towers and minarets will enrich a picture as beautiful as nature has ever painted. Within those walls, beneath those domes, there will be installed for the benefit of the visitor from every land, but primarily for the education of our people, an adequate and comprehensive exhibition of the modern activities of man in all the various fields of art and industry.

It pleases me to have this exposition, its buildings and its grounds rich with their horticultural adornment, likened to an enormous oriental rug, unrolled upon the floor of a natural amphitheater, some three miles long, upon the shores of San Francisco Bay. And such a rug it will very much resemble. It pleases me to trace within its design the likeness to a rug for prayer; and, supposing it to be such, and of the usual pattern, there will stand pointing toward our Mecca, on the very spot where the worshiper should bow his head, the Fine Arts Building.

This is no time or place to sing individual praises. The decorative panels beneath this building's great dome will themselves proclaim, in due season, the genius and the skill of their painter, Mr. Robert Reid. It is, however, fitting before this Palace of the Arts is filled, before it becomes the storehouse of es-

thetic treasure from all the world, to pay one word of tribute to its creator, Mr. B. R. Maybeck of San Francisco, an artist-architect who has learned "how grace is wedded to dignity, how strength enhances sweetness that elegance shall be the result."

We live through industry, we grow through art.

If the Fine Arts Department of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition shall adequately perform its functions, a new chapter will have been written on the influence of World's Fairs upon the development of art. This is so for very simple reasons.

It is only in recent times that transportation facilities have made easily possible full intercourse between the East and the West and, heretofore, the occasion for the Easterner to visit and to know the West has not arisen. Separated from each other by mountain, plain and river, the Atlantic and the Pacific Coasts of our country have never before been welded into one—one in sentiment and one in understanding. Now the occasion and the opportunity are at hand. The West needs the East and the East needs the West—and the bells are almost ringing that shall usher in their marriage morning.

Thirty millions of people west of the Mississippi River, favored by fortune, rich in material wealth, cultured through that knowledge obtained at second hand from books, await that culture, that education which comes from a hearing at first hand of the message of the arts. Twice that number of people east of the Mississippi need knowledge of the West. They need to realize what it means to be a citizen of the whole United States; to be a sharer in the privilege, riches and freedom of our entire country; they need the pent-up power of those who have for half a century stood upon the borders of the broad Pacific, the final vanguard of the great army of civilization which now, at last, has encircled the world.

Our Eastern artists, too, need knowledge of the high Sierras, the rich valleys and the dramatic canyons of the great West; they need knowledge of the char-

acter of a great people. And the artists of the West, far removed from comradeship, from the friendly stimulus in endeavor which comes with intimate association with coworkers, need the artists of the East.

San Francisco offers opportunity for acquaintance between the people of our whole country.

It will offer in the Fine Arts Building a carefully selected showing of the contemporary works of painters and sculptors of Europe and of the Orient. It will offer an historical chronological section of the works of painters and sculptors of America from the time of Copley, West and Stuart down to the generation which just preceded our own. With cooperation, it hopes to offer a loan collection of works of the artists of all times and all schools which have influenced our own development. It offers these to the student that he may, through study of them, know, appreciate and understand the American artist of our own day; and, finally, it offers to the artist of today opportunity for the study of his own work in comparison with the work of all the world; and an audience brought together from the far ends of the earth, but composed largely of an eager, sympathetic, temperamental and waiting people.

In a word, the influence of World's Fairs upon the development of art is as the influence of the sun upon the flowers. We have been given by Providence in this broad land a great and fertile garden. From among us have risen those who have created in new beauty the flowers of art. The sun of material prosperity has been made to shine upon us. Our eyes have been opened that we may see and know "the lights and shades that march and counter-march about the hills in glorious aspiration." As the Psalmist sang, "Yea, verily, we have a goodly heritage."

Shall we not so love our hills, so cultivate our gardens, so cherish and guard our heritage that the whole future may be the richer? For this purpose was the American Federation of Arts founded and formed.